



Los Alamos notifies employees, visitors of possible beryllium exposure

January 28, 2009



LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, January 28, 2009— Los Alamos National Laboratory is notifying approximately 1,890 current and former employees and authorized visitors of potential exposure to beryllium based on recently discovered beryllium contamination at one of the Lab's technical areas.

For approximately 240 employees who worked at the facility, documented experience shows that approximately two percent (2%) of these workers exposed to beryllium could become sensitized, and an even smaller percentage could develop chronic beryllium disease. For the remaining approximately 1,650 visitors, the risks of exposure are extremely low because of the activities performed and the relatively short period of time spent at the location. Authorized visitors include approximately 1,000 former and current Lab employees and 650 non-Lab personnel who generally took classified tours at the Laboratory.

Current and former Laboratory employees and contractors who either worked at or visited the facility have been—or are in the process of being—notified of the beryllium levels. For affected personnel, the Laboratory's Safety Help Desk, (505) 665-7233, will have an operator standing by for questions or concerns. The help desk will be open Monday through Friday, during regular business hours. A personal consultation with an industrial hygienist will be arranged for those concerned about exposure.

All current and former employees and visitors to the facility will be offered a beryllium sensitivity test.

These potential exposures were discovered in November and December of 2008 after industrial hygiene sampling at Technical Area 41 identified the presence of beryllium on some surfaces.

The location is used to store legacy and surplus materials. Access was immediately restricted and posted as a beryllium contamination area. Decontamination of the facility has begun and should be completed by February.

Beryllium is a silver-gray, nonradioactive metal that is extremely light, melts at a relatively high temperature, and is very stable. As a metal with many applications in electronics, aerospace and weapons work, beryllium also is used in consumer items like golf clubs and recreational bicycle frames.

Beryllium is a hazardous material in a particulate or finely powdered form. In certain susceptible individuals, inhalation of beryllium particles can result in a medical condition known as chronic beryllium disease (CBD), which can impair lung function.

For more information on beryllium exposure hazards, please go to the Department of Energy's beryllium information website at <http://orise.ornl.gov/oews/be-studies-testing.htm>.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

Operated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC for the Department of Energy's NNSA

